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ABSTRACT

Some student activities using still and motion pictures in class work are described. In elementary grades, pupils brought in family photographs to illustrate concepts like "family" and "friendship" and then wrote stories centering around the pictures for their classmates to read. They made movies illustrating concepts like "light." When students shot sequences of their film *in order*, it taught them to plan ahead using storyboards and also saved expensive editing equipment. By using their imaginations, students achieved zoom and fade-in effects, among others, with only simple cameras. Teachers found films and photographs to augment their lesson plans. Films made by ghetto students made real for suburban children experiences they have never had. With imagination, teachers have used commercial media packages serve ends for which they were not originally intended. (JK)

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FILM: THE WORLD WILL JUST FALL INTO PLACE.

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Travelling to numerous conferences, conventions, workshops, and other meetings as an Education Specialist for Eastman Kodak Company has brought many delights. Among them have been many opportunities to share teachers' exciting discoveries of techniques for inspiring students to achieve while simultaneously feeling the thrill of success. Because they associate me with a camera and film company, teachers often speak to me of their uses of still and motion pictures. Many of the learning-place successes have been widely tauted--the Yellow Ball Workshop in animation, the North Reading Massachusetts screen education project, the Willowbrook High School cinema study project in Illinois, and the many events sponsored by the American Film Institute.

Pictures have become encompassing experiences for children at the Centennial Schools in Warminster, Pennsylvania. There, Dr. Henry Ray has created a place for engrossing students in pictorial experiences. The school has one room that is shaped as a dome. Differing from other rooms at McDonald Elementary School, the dome room accommodates 360 degree projection. By actuating several projectors simultaneously, teachers can make students feel they are sitting in woods on a snowy day or lying postrate on the Sahara. Yet, these sensations can be created without danger of frostbite or heat exhaustion. Also, a planetarium projector can be used. Children may step from the curved hallway outside into other galaxies at the sound of a few footfalls.

Few schools, however, have been granted the several hundreds of thousands of dollars that went into creating this exotic setting. However, almost any school can create an environmental projection room. Students can construct wooden frames in the school's wood shop. By stapling sheets (in a manner similar to the way canvasses are mounted on stretchers--ask the art teacher) to these frames, admirable rear projection screens can be created. Three such frame-and-sheet screens can be joined by hinges to form something resembling a triptych or three-sided backdrop. Using bi-focal converters on three KODAK Carousel or Ektagraphic slide projectors with similar lenses creates all the needed equipment for projecting a visual environment. The Creative Environment Center which serves the San Francisco Unified School District is similarly constructed. S.F.U.S.D. converted the third floor of an elementary school into the Creative Environment Center with cloth and boards and chairs and a little projection equipment.

How can kids prepare themselves for using a creative environment center or a triptych projection environme...? What are the necessary steps? Teachers have told me a number of ways in which they guide children in uses of visuals such as prints and slides and movies. Many of the preparatory steps have begun in the very early grades. "Start small" seems to be the byword for very young children. Let's look at a couple of examples.

The elementary schools in Pittsford, New York invited the very young children in their early grades to bring in family snapshots for use in class. The youngsters did as they were bid. Pictures of various shapes and sizes, color, and black-and-white, began pouring into the classrooms.

Teachers raided the nurses' offices to procure tongue depressors. They returned to classes to fasten pictures to the tongue depressors with masking tape. The resulting ice-cream stick pictures were called "picture paddles." They were used in several exciting ways, which we might call the "unit," the "cluster," and the "sequence."

Children would first use picture paddles as "units." The teacher would use words such as "friendship," "enjoyment," "family," or other words with specific emotional properties. The young people would then choose picture paddles they thought best represented the word the teacher had talked about. Each child would then explain the picture paddle he had chosen and why he had chosen it. Grandma at the stove was "friendship," because she cared enough to make jelly tarts, even though she wasn't "my" grandma. And Darryl, the pedigree family fox-mongrel puppy, was "enjoyment" because even if you just looked at him he was warm and furry and was wetting the rug.

The "cluster" units seemed to be more fun and somewhat more vocal. When the teacher said "family," a child would proceed to the elegant mess that was a picture-paddle pile. He would rummage through the paddles and choose several, or even more, that represented the concept to him. Then, he would masking-tape each paddle, by its handle, to a large piece of cardboard which said "family" on top. As the child explained each pictorial element in his visible family concept, the teacher would take some notes that eventually found themselves written on the cardboard where the picture cluster was mounted. These picture clusters would remain in the classroom for about a week before the next exercise saw them dismantled, so that the pictures could be used to illustrate other concepts.

From "clusters" of concept-related pictures, children proceeded to sequences. Teachers asked students if there might be one or two among them that could use the family Brownie for some classroom exercises. Result: numerous simple cameras appeared in classrooms on the following day. Then the teacher discussed ways in which children used services in the community or nearby businesses or recreational facilities. Then, she asked them how they might show these uses by making an essay with photographs. Using blank 3 x 5-inch cards, the students planned photographic sequences that could be made in areas near the school building. Shopping for candy at the corner store, playing on the jungle bars at the playground, a game of baseball, and other relevant topics became the subjects of visual essays. Then, the kids went out and photographed their essays themselves.

Processed pictures returned from the photo-finisher. The children mounted the pictures on heavy-weight colored paper. Then, they wrote or dictated stories that would be printed in large letters (some chose I.T.A.) on white paper that was to be mounted beneath each picture in the essay. Upon completion of the writing and mounting, each child had a book of his own creation to serve as his reader. Readers were eventually swapped and exchanged among classmates, and later whole classes swapped their book sets. This provided a variety of relevant reading experiences to many children. From the standpoint of learning theory, it was beneficial, too, as many of the words were reinforced by the pictures under which they appeared. Thus, if a child had some trouble in determining a particular word, he might glance back at the picture for some clues.

But the students might also have made slides first, which would have expanded the number of creative avenues they took. First, print cards could have been made from the slides. The prints could be used in making books and magazines for reading units. The slides could have been assembled into a multi-media show, where several projectors

were actuated by a tape recording, and a triptych-projection environmental show could have been repeated for classes throughout the school. Then kids could say, "I not only saw the show, I also read the book!"

Children grow older and become more accustomed to thinking in terms of disciplines--history, math, science, and English. We live in an era in which the media files are often brimming with packages for teaching specific disciplines. Although these media packages have provided many advantages for teachers, they have also somewhat limited certain kinds of creativity in the classroom. Media packages for teaching specific disciplines have been useful in providing teachers with greater planning time, because units of instruction could be snatched off the shelves and plopped into the projector or projectors.

Seldom does one find the history teacher rifling through the art department slides to find materials for teaching 18th Century European History. However, one can well presume that history will be brought to life, when Napoleon and Josephine hold hands (in portrait form) in the classroom. Numerous famous battles, social issues, living conditions, and political controversies have been illustrated over many centuries by concerned artists. These illustrations may breathe great excitement into an otherwise abstract unit.

Similarly, language arts teachers presenting units on mythology might well turn to Peter Paul Rubens' rendition of Odysseus coming to shore. Hermes, Aphrodite, Demeter, Peleus and Thetis, and many other of the classic myths have been made visible in either plastic or graphic form. These have been recorded on visuals usually used in art classes but also useful for myriad other uses. Think of the excitement of students who had been discussing William Tell, regaled by multi-screen renditions of

the same story through the interpretations of numerous artists, and accompanied by Rossini's famous music of the same name. And to think that such a happening is only as far away as the School's record file and the art history slide collection.

The substance of my intention here is to say that perhaps, in a pictorial sense, we should not be confined by the boundaries of various disciplines we teach. Art students may better learn to draw the shapes, textures, colors and patterns in nature by using biology slides as their models. Suburban language arts students might better compassionate in reading THE FIRE NEXT TIME (Baldwin), by watching the visual stories of inner-city kids in Philadelphia which may be procurred through Young Filmmaker's Exchange in that city. Social studies students may learn more about the process of urbanization through watching a psychology presentation about a community of rats that created its own population problems. Thus, commercially prepared media packages for specific disciplines may serve a variety of intellectual and emotional interests for which they were not originally intended.

What can be done with still pictures may surprise children. Students in Project PAR (Photography and the Arts in Reading) at Benjamin Franklin High School in Ridgewood, New Jersey regularly send their illustrated correspondence to students in Japan, who are learning English. Students at Enfield High School in Thompsonville, Connecticut act as both managers and users of a living history laboratory where still and motion picture cameras, projectors, and tape recorders are available for adding several media dimensions to student ideas and reports. And an education center in Oakland, California uses still photography as a key recording tool in units on environmental education.

Motion pictures, too, have found a comfortable niche in the classroom. They have not evolved into the complete environments that we may find in the Centennial Schools, but they have been used more widely than almost any other single non-print medium.

Few schools in North America are not equipped with at least one 16mm sound motion picture projector. There are almost no schools in North American communities without access to films through libraries, mail order service, rentals, or media centers. Reasons for this popularity are many: the international standardization of 16mm film dimensions, the widespread use of optical sound tracks, the economical nature of the medium, the durability of newer bases for film stock, and the ease with which the medium can be used.

Teachers for a long time used films without touching them. In my English and Humanities classrooms, some years ago, a student member of the Audio-Visual brigade would bring a projector to the room, would manfully reconnoiter the room for electrical outlets, would bark out his orders for the shades to be drawn. He would make the speaker pop by toggling a switch and deftly wound the film around the sprockets and through the gate. The little person nearest the door would wait watchfully, anticipating the order for lights to be doused, and soon the show would go on! Alas! Now the classroom is only in my mind, and I thread my own projector.

Traditional educational films have been commercially produced. Indeed, they differ from television commercials in pacing, lustre, and aesthetic design, but they are highly useful. They have saved teachers countless hours of assembling materials, have brought new faces into the classroom,

have made the "far away" and "exotic" accessible, and have given respite to vocal chords. Similar to commercially produced slides and filmstrips, films have been used according to the disciplines they purport to teach usually as units on specific topics. There have, however, been a few exceptions.

Commercially produced short films of an artistic nature have been used in a variety of ways. Many teachers have used short artistic films as stimuli for creative writing. Many movies such as My Own Yard to Play In, It's About This Carpenter, The Hand, Run!, and Sunday Lark call up elements of one's imagination, make him speak, and trace indelible paths in his mind. Moreover, they make him write more creative prose because they excite his sense of active participation. But these films do not "teach" in the conventional sense.

However, what prevents the English teacher from showing a travellogue when teaching a novel that is about people of another nation? What prevents the history teacher and the film study teacher (art or English) from collaborating on teaching with a copy of Griffith's Birth of A Nation (distributed by the Museum of Modern Art in New York) to combine units on American History, and script writing and movie making all in one? Moreover teachers of diverse disciplines can get films of varying lengths and subjects, even feature films, for collaborative endeavors showing students that the boundaries between disciplines exist only in men's minds.

But teachers are not the only ones who can use film in the classroom. Students may use motion pictures and motion picture film for recording, reporting, and creating. Jerry Hickman, Language Arts Consultant for

the State of Texas, reports that students in Austin solicited scrap footage ("outtakes" as they are called) from local television stations that produce their own local news films. They spliced the "outtakes" together and showed the results as completed films. This created some novel juxtapositions of activities to show students how they "read" the actions that they see everyday. Students in Texas have also painted on clear leader film and scratched designs on opaque leader film. Both of the latter practices create exciting color shows, and can be done without special equipment.

First graders at #6 in Rochester's inner city used an approach that differed from the Pittsford picture paddle units, clusters, and sequences. They made movies. In one unit, the teacher introduced the topic of light. She worked with students to build a word bank upon which they might depend for words relating to light and its various properties, such as brightness, color, reflection, glare, and sparkle. When the word bank was sufficiently large, the teacher talked of various experiments with light that could be performed in the classroom. Children would sit in the dark and shine lights through various colors of liquid. They would watch shadows of various sorts playing on colored surfaces. These experiments were rehearsed until they flowed smoothly. Then the teacher brought in a Super 8 movie camera and the students made a movie using their experiments punctuated by explanatory flash cards upon which word bank words were written.

The processed movie began with flash card titles. It showed an experiment and explained that which was not immediately evident. The movie proceeded with experiments and flash card explanations and was terminated with a little written summary. This helped the children to learn to read as well as to understand more about light. Whereas other units without the movies were finished and forgotten, the children insisted

that their light movie be shown to all visitors to their classrooms as well as to other lcasses in the school.

Kids at Sir Francis Drake High School in San Anselmo, California made some very interesting "live animation" films. This was done by having actors assume sequential poses step-by-step and photograph each individual pose with a short burst (three to five frames) with a Super 8 movie camera. The resulting movies were quite comical. Individuals jerked from place to place, disappeared and reappeared in the same scene, and jittered out some interesting plots at a very low cost. One delightful sequence was made by having a boy sit in an untrafficked street, assuming a position as if he was driving a car. (Of course, there was no car!) After each burst of the movie camera, the boy moved forward in the street several feet. The result was a boy driving down the street on his buttocks at about thirty miles per hour. In and out of driveways he sped, over the curbstones, and across the lawns. Everyone thought it was hilarious.

Also on the list of feasible films for student production are KINESTASIS films. From the Greek roots kine and stasis meaning motion and stillness respectively, KINESTASIS means movies that are made from still pictures. Let's say you have a simple movie camera like the KODAK Instamatic M-26 (pardon the preference). Using a ring adapter and a +2 close-up attachment, you are ready to make kinestasis movies. Position the camera lens slightly, less than 18 inches from the subject (if you wish to be exact, 17 3/4"). Then position colored or black-and-white pictures in a rectangular area 5 5/8" by 7½" directly in front of the lens. Then make short bursts of exposed frames of each picture you choose. When the film is processed, you will have an abstract kinestasis film. By choosing pictures that are related thematically, you can discover new relationships among elements of a topic.

Very careful workers can be greatly rewarded by kinestasis films. They may calculate (on the basis of an 18 frame per second filming speed) the amounts of time that various images will occupy on the screen. Thus, they may create rhythms with the still picture images that correspond to songs or poems that will be heard while the movie is being shown. In the case of the kinestasis film, AMERICAN TIME CAPSULE, historical pictures flash past to the beat of drums. Kinestasis can be easier than animation to execute and more effective than more conventional ways of displaying still pictures for energetic and action-oriented youth.

Children who have attended the Yellow Ball Workshop in Lexington, Massachusetts have enjoyed the learning of the art of animation. Animation experiences are most economical, because they involve making movies frame by frame. The student may build a copystand upon which to mount his camera. Then, using close-up attachments and appropriate distances between the lens and the subject, the student photographs individual drawings. Each drawing differs from the previous drawing only slightly. By representing actions sequentially, only one mini-movement of the subject in each frame, the student can create characters similar to Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, or the host of other fantasy characters with which he is familiar. This process requires some patience. As many as 3,000 individual drawings may be required for each 50-foot cartridge of Super 8 film. Pessimists will insist that students will not spend the time required for making a completely animated film.

Yvonne Andersen of the Yellow Ball Workshop might disagree. I have seen animated films submitted to the KODAK Teen-Age Movie Awards contest that represent many hundreds of hours of work. To some students time is but a small obstacle.

The most difficult and also most rewarding filmic accomplishment is usually the recording of a narrative dramatic fiction on film. Several books have been written on this subject. Those which come most frequently to my attention are: CHILDREN AS FILMMAKERS by John Lidstone and Don McIntosh, New York, 1970, Rodger Larson and Ellen Meade's YOUNG FILMMAKERS, New York, E. P. Dunn & Co., 1969, and Douglas Lowndes, FILM-MAKING IN SCHOOLS, New York, 1969. All three of these books are very practical "how-to" books explaining various processes, important in teaching filmmaking.

Lowndes suggests having children begin by making still photographic sequences as plans for their movies. This accomplishes several desirable goals. First, it sensitizes children to aspects of visual composition, to aspects of lighting and to the nature of montage (the cutting together of scenes). Secondly, it gives them practice in manipulating cameras and in cooperating as teams. Thirdly, the finished photographic sequence provides a "story board" (the visual equivalent of an outline) for creating the final movie.

Using still photographic sequences as the story board for the movie often saves a good deal of expense and trouble. Why? When a student has completed a still photographic sequence which he considers to be a suitable story board for his movie, he has a plan that tells him how to compose each scene and how to shoot those scenes in order. Thus, the student can photograph his titles, the narrative story, and the final movie credits in order without wasting any film footage. When children use other less orderly methods, they usually find it necessary to spend much time over the

editing table cutting and editing, modifying and reworking their original footage before they have a finished product.

If a film has many splices in it, it may be difficult to project because sloppy splices tend to hang up in the gates of the projectors and tend to cause excessive breakage while the film is being shown. The film which is edited in the camera usually has very few splices and runs more smoothly. In-the-camera editing is economical in another way. If students are encouraged to plan their films carefully before shooting them, and are encouraged to "dry run" each scene before filming it, the school may not have to lay out the expense of an editor/viewer with rewinds, a splicer, splicing tape or film cement and all of the other equipment that may be found in student cutting rooms.

My preference for in-the-camera editing and in general for the careful planning of visual presentations is based upon many reports from schools whose film programs are financially undernourished and may be cut out of the curriculum at any time, because of the high expenses that accompany their meager results. A second very important report that is frequently received is from teachers who have purchased expensive cameras with zoom lenses, reflex viewing, multiple running speeds, and other complexities. If a student has been given a camera with many knobs to twiddle and buttons to press, he will spend his time in knob-twiddling and button-pressing rather than in planning <u>what</u> he wants to say through the visual medium and <u>how</u> he plans to say it.

Students who are given very simple cameras are forced to think. Imagine possessing a camera you can do only two things with. The first is to look through the viewfinder to see what is out there, and the second is to press the button and record it. What creative things can you do

with this camera? Can you zoom in with the camera? Can you fade out on one scene and fade into another? Actually, you can probably do all of these if you can put your creative intelligence to work.

In bright sunlight, a box movie camera will remain in focus from 3 feet to infinity. By placing a student with a camera in a wheelchair (borrowed from the nurses office), one may zoom in from 50 feet away up to a distance of 3 feet from the subject, by merely pushing the camera, and cameraman towards the subject. This creates an effective zoom without a zoom lens. Why use the wheelchair? If the student walked up to the subject with his camera to create his zoom, the jostling and bouncing that we are seldom aware of in walking would become quite visible on the screen. Using the wheelchair creates a very smooth zoom without the camera motion up and down that we would find in walking. Thus, the simple camera zooms! If the student wishes one scene to fade in to the other, he may cut two pieces of paper as shown below.

By placing the camera lens in between the two pieces of cardboard thus cut and then bringing the pieces of cardboard together over the lens somewhat slowly, the student creates a fade out. By repeating the proces in reverse at the beginning of the next scene, the student may fade in.

Schopenhauer once said that we best understand the things we have discovered for ourselves. So it is with children and learning with film. They will understand best the events they witness and record themselves. Through creative uses of the many film media, teachers may share the excitement children feel when they discover the hidden facts and meanings and relationships in the common world about them. Teachers report that children are like complex jigsaw puzzles, with their own images on one side and a map of the earth on the other. Maybe, if we put the children into order, the world will just fall into place.